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THE
IDEA AND NECESSITY
OF
Normal School Training.



BY
REV. GEO. B. SPALDING, D. D.,
OF DOVER, N. H.

THE
IDEA AND NECESSITY
OF
NORMAL SCHOOL TRAINING.

AN ADDRESS

BY
REV. GEO. B. SPALDING, D. D.,
" "

OF DOVER, N. H.

Delivered at the Dedication of the Normal School Building at Gorham, Maine, Dec. 26, 1878.

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Normal School Training.

Governor Connor, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:—

We are met here to-day to inaugurate a new movement in the interests of education. The soil out of which it springs is certainly favorable to its growth.

The people of Gorham, years before this province became a State, were distinguished for their culture, and for the sacrifices which they made to secure the establishment among them of an advanced institution of learning. It is now just three-quarters of a century since the Gorham Academy was incorporated. It was one of the earliest institutions of its kind in northern New England. For years it did a splendid service in the cause of education, sending forth as from a fountain head influences which were powerfully felt throughout the entire State. I recall with personal gratification the fact that the first Preceptor* of your Academy, and the one who was longest and most closely identified with it, was a native of my own town, and received his education from the teachings of one of my predecessors in office; and I recall another, the first lady principal† of your Seminary, whose supreme womanly qualities, whose noble culture and earnest christian spirit were your admiration here, and which in her last days so richly blest the community in which I was born.

The generous spirit of the olden days abides with you still. Then the citizens of Gorham contributed out of their scant resources three thousand dollars for the use of the Academy; and now, by public tax and private gifts, you have donated the munificent sum of nearly thirty thousand dollars,—presenting it to the people of Maine, in the form of a commodious and elegant building, which you have placed upon the choicest spot in all your noble surroundings.

I cannot conceive of circumstances more auspicious for the great enterprise which we formally institute to-day. It may well evoke your brightest anticipations of success, and the good wishes and ardent hopes of every citizen of the State.

As perhaps helping somewhat towards such a result, I would speak on this occasion of the *Idea and the Necessity of the Normal School Work.*

* Rev. Reuben Nason.

† Mrs. John Lord.

It seems strange to us that some of the simplest mechanical contrivances which we daily use, and without which we do not see how we could live at all—it seems passing strange to us—that so many ages should have gone by before their discovery or invention! Six thousand years of human observation of the expansive power of heated water, and yet with never one thought of its immeasurable utility in the way of subserving men's most common wants. The great ark built, the Tower of Babel reared, the enormous pyramids lifted into the air, the mighty aqueducts and roads of the Roman Empire constructed, and yet the busy workers never bethinking themselves of that simplest, most natural of all implements, without which we of to-day would not know how to build a railroad, or even transport a load of bricks across our yard. It belonged to the genius of Leonardo, living in the sixteenth century of our era, to think out and construct a wheelbarrow!

It seems equally strange to us that so long a period of mental activity should have elapsed,—that so many methods and systems of education should have been devised, that the great universities and schools of Europe should have been so long in operation.—before it should have dawned upon some man that the most natural of all things, and the most necessary of all things, was a system of special teaching for those who would themselves teach.

But without a doubt the idea had many times been thought of. Just as a suspicion of the power and possibilities of steam, or the distinct shape of a wheelbarrow, had flashed upon the human mind long before Watt sat by the boiling kettle, or the great artist made his rough sketch of the Irishman's vehicle.

The truth is, that which makes one man to differ from another, that, too, which accounts for the discoveries which have blest the world; where many men think, doubt, desire, hope, and even attempt, one comes who pierces through thoughts and things with the power of lightning, and that which is only a hazy notion or a mere theory to others becomes an *act* to this one; thought is clothed with words; words are endued with flesh, and the deed is brought to pass.

So it came about in 1681 that a French priest, La Salle, struck with the gross ignorance of the common people in his parish at Rheims, saw that, in order to effect anything in the way of educating them, he must first of all begin to train the teachers whom he would put over them to better methods of teaching. With the idea came the act. He instituted a school of training and put himself at the head of it. When once he had gotten his corps of disciplined instructors into the field, the work of educating and elevating his parish went prosperously on.

Sixteen years later Franke, the eminent German divine and philanthropist, opened a similar school in connection with his famous Orphan House at Halle, in which he greatly developed this system of special training. The surprising success which attended it challenged the interest of the government, and the liberal support of the mightiest ruler of his age, Frederick the Great, followed. Soon in numerous places of Europe Normal Schools were established, until now they count up nearly a thousand.

I have said that it is a strange thing that this idea of special training for teachers did not sooner get itself instituted in Europe, but a stranger thing than this is that more than a century should go by after its success was so entirely demonstrated there before it gained a foothold here in America.

In regard to the idea of education America, at the very first, was far in advance of every part of the world. Even at the beginning, our fathers struck that altogether new, that magnificent idea, universal education. In Europe learning had always been "a thing apart from the condition, the calling, the service and the participation of the great mass of men." It aimed at the training of a privileged class; it savored of the soil out of which it sprang; it was a creature of tyranny, and it became almost always the servant of tyranny. It was this intellectual culture which adorned the courts of kings, and enabled the few to maintain an ascendancy over the fears and weaknesses of the people.

It was nothing less than an inspiration from heaven that led the founders of our American institutions to see that education, which in the hands of a privileged few had been the instrument of bondage, would become in the hands of the people the instrument of their freedom and elevation. Hence these great men enacted, as one of the earliest of their laws, that "the selectmen of every township shall have a vigilant eye over their brethren and neighbors, and to see that none of them shall suffer so much barbarism in any of their families as not to endeavor to teach, by themselves or others, their children and apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue and obtain a knowledge of the capital laws, upon the penalty of twenty shillings for each and every neglect therein." Five years later it was enacted that "every township, as soon as the Lord had increased it to the number of fifty houses, should appoint one to teach *all* children to read and write, and that every township of a hundred houses shall set up a grammar school, whose master should be able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university."

Whether it was that these founders of a new empire, whose coming greatness no one dares to limit, believed that education is the chief good, and so in itself is worthy of the government's utmost functions to secure, or believed that education is necessary for the preservation of a free government and for the securing of the citizen in his life and liberties, it matters not. This thing is certain, that they were the first people ever existing who held the idea of an education for all, and who by enforced law and taxation sought to secure it for all. This is the fundamental principle which underlies our American institutions. This, even more than our form of government, marks us off from the other people of the earth.

Now what surprises us is, that a people, which seized this magnificent idea with such strength and clearness, should have been so slow in adopting that method which their keen common sense should have taught them, and which the experiments of the Old World had shown was absolutely indispensable for the full development of that idea. The frame-

work which the fathers had set up was admirable, but the machinery within was rude and clumsy, and the product was getting worse and worse as time went on. The truth is, that our fathers of the eighteenth century had troubles of many kinds, which sorely interfered with their religious and educational projects. There were the French and Indian Wars, following each other in quick and almost unending succession, and distracting controversies with false teachers, evil spirits, and arbitrary governors; and at last came the great struggle for independence and the war of the revolution with its fearful demoralizations. A recent writer, alluding to this last era, says that "the revolution had a most disastrous effect on popular education. At the beginning of the present century the school houses were mean and inconvenient; the school apparatus was defective; the teachers were in many cases ill prepared for their duties; the educational methods were slovenly and antiquated." A few years later large populations, particularly in our cities, were without the most common rudiments of education. Thousands and tens of thousands of illiterate immigrants were pouring into the land from every portion of Europe. Even the children of the country districts were being badly taught.

There were men among us who were filled with alarm at this condition of things. They were stung by the consciousness of having neglected the work which the founders of New England had so nobly begun. They henceforth gave themselves with a tremendous zeal and energy to the development of all the resources which lay hidden in this system of popular education. Foremost among these men I name Rev. Charles Brooks, of Hingham, Mass. He came home from Europe with an earnest determination to introduce into America the Prussian system of Normal Schools. He preached, lectured and wrote upon the subject, gradually enlisting for its support some of the ablest men in the country. In 1838, just forty years ago, the Legislature of Massachusetts made its first appropriation for Normal Schools. Since then the work of their establishment has gone bravely forward, until now in the different States of the Union there are one hundred and forty of these institutions, many of them receiving from the States in which they are located princely endowments. New York expends annually upon her Normal Schools, I think, nearly one hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

And yet how much remains to be done before this most essential principle in our Educational system shall be fully developed, and be permitted to have its full place there. How much information there is yet to be disseminated among the people before they will come into an understanding of it. How much of hard argument and solemn rebuke there is to be administered before the jealousies and prejudices of educated men shall be allayed and shamed out of them.

The common idea is that any man or woman who has a knowledge of the subject required to be taught, is abundantly competent to teach that subject.

The district school! What is the average committee man's idea of it; of its necessities; of the qualification of its master? For the winter

school what else was needed than that the teacher should be from one of the classes in college, and that he should have grit and muscle enough to hold his own against a score or more of great hulky fellows, whose insurrectionary spirits were being secretly fired by most of the citizens of the district, who would regard it as a good joke if the master was turned out of doors? If the young man put down the young rebels, and "kept the school out," he filled the popular idea of a good teacher. I recall the successive teachers under whom I came as a boy. I do not think that there was an ignorant man among them, nor one who failed to hold us in due order; but this I can say of them, teachers in the school, and I might almost add, professors in the college, that there was only one of them all who was truly competent to teach; only one who knew how to inspire a whole school with his own enthusiasm in study, who knew how to adjust his flexible methods to the needs and capacities of every scholar, until he made a school composed of one part braggarts, and the other part dullards, a company of earnest, happy students. I recall only one such, and him my father bailed out of jail to put him over us, having wit enough to see that there was some other than an evil genius in the man. That teacher! His life, his fire in the school room, his kindly look, his frown, his lucid explanations, his illustrations so new and startling to us, his appeals to our individual minds, and adroit drawings forth of capacities within us of whose possession we had never dreamed; his ways of pricking conceit, his patience with slow, stolid intellects, and the moral elevation he gave us, quickening our sense of justice, making us to despise a lie, compelling us to love him, so that I think we could have died for him! And yet, the man was a criminal! Yes. Who can explain the anomaly? One thing I know, he could teach!

✓ The supreme mistake which we have all along been committing is in our idea of education. We have looked upon it as mainly, if not only, an imparting to children of certain facts, a stocking of their minds with what we call knowledge as to this and that subject. This being so, all that we have deemed as necessary in the teacher is, that he himself should know what he teaches. The book is made up of facts and rules. The teacher is simply to supplement the book along this line of information. To get the historical data into a child's memory; to lodge the mathematical formula in the child's mind, so that with a sort of mechanical accuracy it can work out under it some problem in arithmetic; to drill a child to know the difference between a period and a comma, and just how many more it shall count at one than at the other,—this was the old idea of education, and still, to a very large extent, remains so. To think of the human mind as a living entity, as a thinking, reasoning, judging, imagining being, having all possible and necessary powers and faculties within itself, and that it is the supreme object of what we call education, to develop and discipline these inner forces; that even in the facts, in the knowledge we give the human mind, we are after all seeking to train the mind to best assimilate these; to make them its own, to have power to use them,—such an idea of education is a novelty to most people, to most teachers, or if these last have caught at the better thought, it enters

as no distinct, supreme, all-forming principle into their methods of instruction. It is this conception of the human mind, not as a thing which must be filled up, not as a pigeon-holed affair, into whose separate compartments we put our labeled kinds of knowledge; not this, but as a living principle or rather being, entire in itself, with all-sufficient forces within, which it is ours to develop, direct and discipline, for all the uses of a complete manhood or womanhood; it is this conception of education that gives any real dignity to it, and which also makes necessary in those who would truly educate, a special genius for it, or (for we cannot only now and then have that) a special training for it. How we have degraded this teaching profession, and degraded the children in subjecting them to it! Young persons enter it as Thomas Fuller said it was in his day: "as if nothing else were required to set themselves up in it but a rod or a ferule; and others enter it as refuge from present want, or as a passage to better preferment, to patch the rents in their present fortune till they can provide a new one."

No man would subject his fine blooded colts to any such awkward hands. He knows that the tremendous rate of speed, which the last few years have shown, is largely attributable to that superb skill which the trainer has exercised in developing the before unknown powers of his horse. And this skill of the driver is the fine result of his own patient training, his special apprenticeship in his special business. No man, picked up at random, because of his strength of muscle and loudness of voice, could drive a Rarus around the course with a speed that makes time seem to lag. It requires a man to do that whose eye has been taught, whose touch has become delicate, whose head has been steadied, whose entire being has been brought to such a pitch of controlled sympathy that it beats in rhythmic movement with the flying racer. Shall we do less for our children than we do for our horses? This special and prolonged training we demand of men in all the other professions. What is the Minister's Theological Seminary, but a Normal School to teach him how best to preach? What is the Lawyer's University, but his Normal School to train him in the understanding of the law, and the wise conduct of his case? What is the Doctor's Medical School, except a Normal School to discipline him into a skillful practitioner in his healing art? And the engineer and chemist and the painter each has his Normal School, where he is carefully trained for the profession of his life. Even the soldier has his Normal School, where by special discipline he is made a proficient in the science of military affairs. How sore a lesson was taught us in the great war; when we put our armies under the control of intelligent men, of patriotic men, but untaught as military leaders? How at last, and indeed, all the way through, we had to look to the graduates of West Point, the soldier's Normal School, for men with heads large enough to take in the movement of armies a thousand miles apart, and control the battle march of a hundred thousand men over twenty miles of territory, bringing them to bear in due time and order upon the exposed front or detached wing of the opposing host. No man was ever born who could leap hap-hazard into such grand leadership as that. No matter who the

genius was, Frederick, Napoleon, Wellington, or our own Grant, he had to be specially trained for such a splendid success.

Let us then apply the same common sense to this, far graver, matter of training those who are to educate our children, so that the teacher may as thoroughly understand the nature of the child as the driver understands his horse, and may be equally skilled with him in developing its latent capabilities. Let us no longer put raw workmen to this mightiest and most delicate of all tasks, of shaping an immortal mind, and stamping upon it its character and destiny for time and eternity.

What grand natures, equal to any success, capable for any service to which God and man could call them, have been stunted and crippled, put to most serious disadvantage in the great race for life, through the early shapes given to them by ignorant or incompetent teachers, who have had no conscience in the work, or no wit wherewith to perceive the various wants and capabilities of their scholars, and without judgment enough to adjust themselves and their methods in accordance with these. Probably there is no one among us here to-day who does not bear some mark, placed upon him by some teacher, which has more or less marred his character, and lessened his chances for happiness and usefulness in the great struggle of life.

Now the common people, the men and women whose open ballots or silent votes settle all these matters of public moment, the common people, have only to understand this matter. They would rise up in sternest denunciation of all this shiftless, wasteful, destructive method which has so long been pursued, and demand, as a sacred right which belonged to them as citizens of the State, as tax payers, as supporters of the common schools, that henceforth the children, their own and their neighbors', shall be educated by those who in character and by special training are only competent for such a work. Let them once fairly see the thing, and whatever protests and grumbling they make against excessive taxation, it will not be the tax levied for the support of Normal Schools that they will dare to abate.

But there is opposition to Normal Schools as State institutions from another quarter, from men of education. Such men for the most part are those who are connected with other institutions of learning, which have sprung up and are sustained without State aid. They protest as though it were something partial and unjust that the people should be taxed for the maintenance of Normal Schools while Academies and Colleges are left to themselves.

But the answer to this is easy. Academies and Colleges, all of these schools of higher learning, important as they are, do not stand in the same relation to the State and to the citizen as do the common schools. We could conceive of a republic within whose territory was no college nor seminary,—I do not think it would be the best type of a republic—but we could not conceive of a free State existing at all without common schools. There is no need of my fortifying this point, for it is in no danger of attack from any true American citizen. The foundations of our free institutions were laid upon the common school system, and where

that system has prevailed there has been no strain nor crack in that part of the great structure. Now the point is, that this work of special training of teachers for our common schools is a part of our common school system. It is now, in view of the new elements which have been brought into the question, in view of the vast tides of immigration which have set in upon us, and the full powers of citizenship with which we have equipped all classes among us;—this work of special training of teachers for our common school is now a most vital part in our system of popular education. The common school finds all its value to the State in the fact that it is a *good* common school. What we need is not a new system of popular instruction, but only that the system itself should be worked with force and efficiency. What is a school without a teacher, without a competent teacher? To make competent teachers, then, is just as much a part of the work of the State, its necessary work, as to build a school house. This is the reason why the States are rapidly multiplying and generously maintaining these schools for special training. It is that they may make the system of education upon which they themselves stand worth anything: that it may yield the fruit for which it was planted.

Now this fact takes the Normal School outside the list of other institutions of learning like the Academy, the Seminary, the College. The Normal School is an integral part of the common school system. It belongs to the State to support the one just as much as it belongs to it to support the other.

Why, look at it from an economic way: In these United States there are enrolled in the public schools 9,000,000 of scholars. The number of teachers is 231,000. The amount expended each year upon this vast scheme is upwards of \$82,000,000.

Look at your own State of Maine. The whole number of scholars in your common schools last year was 155,150. Your expenses for maintaining these schools for each year is nearly a million of dollars. Is there not here an argument which comes close home, to the pocket as well as the head, in favor of a system which best secures a wise, economical use of all this vast money and these vast energies? Look at another fact. I think that the figures will show that seven-eighths of the children of this State cease to be educated after they reach fifteen years of age. That is to say, these common schools do all that is done for the education of seven out of every eight of your children. Ought not the education which thus comes to so many in the common schools, and which is restricted to so few years in life, ought it not to be as thorough as possible? These children, too, for the most part, come under the tutorage of young women. With all the excellence which characterizes this class, no one can fail to see that in not a few ways they need to be specially trained for this work of teaching before they can master with any strong hold, or stimulate into any large growth, the minds, of the boys at least, who come under their administration.

These are facts which should be thoroughly understood by our educated men. In their ardent love of higher learning, in the intense loyalty

to the great institutions which gave to them fortune and fame,—or better still, the solid satisfactions of a broad culture,—let them not forget that humble institution which the fathers laid on Plymouth soil, out of which the nation itself sprang; which saved the nation and liberty in its hour of sorest peril; which is to be the nation's glory and security through all its future, the common school where American citizens are educated.

And we of New England need to cherish this with a special pride and fondness, not only for what it has been, but for what it must be to us.

It is said that New England has reached and even passed the summit of its power and influence. But where are the signs of it?

It is not to be affirmed that New England character is dying out, or that it is losing any of its finest qualities. The old stock was too vigorous for that. It has transmitted its best self through all these generations, and yet the old enterprise, the old energy, the old hopefulness, the old faith in God, in man, in the future, remain in their unimpaired integrity among the children. It will not be affirmed that our colleges are losing anything of their characteristic culture and fulness of knowledge, or that they are less popular and influential, or are less attended. The facts are all the other way. Harvard and Yale and Dartmouth and Bowdoin, are sacred places to American scholars, and will be so long as American scholarship exists. But it is not these spiritual elements and forces which these wise prognosticators of our doom have in mind. They are thinking of material things. They are thinking of breadth of territory, of vastness of population, of natural advantages and resources, and not at all of these viewless qualities of brain and energy and inventive genius and spiritual faith and courage, which give character to a man or a people, and enable them, as in the New England of the past, to make a sparse population, a rocky soil and a narrow territory to yield the elements even of a material greatness and prosperity. Men travel through the vast Western world and, gazing upon its mighty reaches of land, its immense fruitfulness, and its teeming cities, come back to us and everything seems small to them here. Men go and sit a while in the halls of Congress, and behold how meagre a proportion makes up the representation of New England. Once, they say, it was very different. Then New England carried her measures and impressed her influence by the number of her ballots. Now she is completely overshadowed by the great majority from the West and South. It is this numerical greatness, this material bulk which first catches the eye, and too often impresses the mind of the spectator.

There is something in all this, but it carries very much less weight than many will admit.

Some one asked a distinguished German why God had made so many Chinamen and so few Germans. His answer was, "it isn't quantity that God is after but quality." So it is; it isn't numbers, but brains that rule the world. It is character, moral stamina, that outweighs all the material bulk of the earth and the universe. The people that has most impressed itself upon the religious thought and destiny of the human

race were few in number. They were shut into a very diminutive territory, and yet Palestine became the central land of the world, and gave us a vision which shines with an unspent luster upon the best civilizations of this nineteenth century. Greece was a little kingdom lying on the fringe of Europe, but the grace of its culture and the fineness of its thought are among the living forces of the present. Up in the north of Europe, half submerged by the sea, a mere dot of land on the map of the earth's surface, lived a people who swept the ocean with her guns, and saved Protestant liberty from the deadly clutch of spiritual and civil absolutism. And over to the extreme west of Europe lies a little island. It is now fourteen hundred years since the Roman legions sailed away from it, leaving it to its fate. What a history has England had. Is she dead yet? Is she dying to-day? I trow not. As Brownson once finely said, "There is not a wrinkle on her brow." Whence comes it that England has led Europe and leads the world to-day? Not because of material bulk, nor territorial demensions, nor countless population, but it comes of a moral stamina unequaled in Europe. There is the hiding of her power.

New England repeats the lesson of the past. Her character, her finer thought, her more spiritual qualities, will give her the supremacy. The time has been when, although overwhelmingly outvoted, she carried the day, by her weight of argument, by her earnest convictions, by her prophetic inspirations, by her higher patriotism, her loftier courage, by her unquenchable love of the truth and her sublime eagerness to die for it. New England policy vanished! New England measures and ideas things of the past! Not so. Not so. When the great crises come; when principles which touch the human conscience or involve the nation's honor or liberty are in peril, it will be New England sentiment, it will be New England men in Congress, that will shape the national policy and save the country from infamy and ruin.

I have no fears for New England. She was born of spiritual ideas. She has always believed in the supremacy of ideas. This is her glory and her security. Let her go straight onward, believing in God. Let her address herself to her material interests with her native genius and energy, and yet keep her face fronted to the heavens, holding still in the fathers' faith in prayer, in the Bible, in the school house, and her future view will be as her past has been, replete with material success and national influence, and spiritual victory.







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